

FREQUENCY AND IMPORTANCE.

Ill-effects with this drug have thus, so far as the experience in these reports goes, been strikingly infrequent. As regards the importance attached to them when they have been met with, only one (No. 5) of seven observers who have noted them has been led on their account to prescribe the drug less frequently. The others expressly state that they are of no importance whatever, and affect in no way the great value of the drug. There is, indeed, striking unanimity amongst observers as to the great value of this drug, especially as an analgesic.

As regards the dosage employed, observers are about equally divided, one-half using 5 grains or less to begin with, the other half using doses of 8 to 10 grains.

The drug appears thus to have a notable freedom from injurious action. Doubtless, if used injudiciously, it would, like antipyrin or antifebrin, although possibly to a smaller degree, produce similar untoward effects.

GENERAL CONCLUSION.

As regards their freedom from ill-effects, so far as these reports show, the drugs may be placed: (1) Phenacetin, (2) Antipyrin, and (3) Antifebrin.

THE HEALTH OF THE PRINCESS OF WALES.

VARIOUS disquieting rumours have been current during the week regarding the health of the Princess of Wales. We have, however, excellent authority for the reassuring and satisfactory statement that Her Royal Highness is now progressing satisfactorily, and that there is no reason for alarm. We understand that, after passing through an attack of influenza, Her Royal Highness suffered a relapse which so seriously affected the throat that fears of diphtheria were entertained. Under these circumstances we believe that Sir William Broadbent was hastily summoned from London. These symptoms, however, quickly passed away, and since then there has been no reason for anxiety. Unfortunately, influenza is a malady which leaves considerable debility and demands care during convalescence—a necessity which has involved arrangements suggesting to some a present danger which we are happy to be able to state no longer exists.

HOSPITAL AND DISPENSARY MANAGEMENT.

THE CITY OF LONDON LUNATIC ASYLUM.

ADMISSION OF PAYING PATIENTS.—From the last annual report we learn that the percentage of recoveries calculated on the admissions was 28.73. This low percentage is accounted for by the admission of a large proportion of incurable cases. In fact, at the close of the year 1892 there were only 13 patients in the asylum who were deemed curable. Post-mortem examinations were made in 32 out of the 35 patients who died, and the proportion of deaths to the total number under treatment was 7.02, or 1.17 per cent. below the average of similar institutions. We are glad to note that the Committee have availed themselves of the power conferred by recent legislation and have commenced to admit paying or private patients. This will prove a great boon to many a little above the pauper class who can afford to pay the reasonable charge of 21s. per week, and we are not surprised to find that in the first year of the experiment there were 26 private patients admitted. Dr. Ernest White, the medical superintendent, reports favourably of the change of dietary which has been effected during the year, with the result that the patients are healthier in appearance, and in most cases have gained weight. Three cases of typhoid fever occurred, due probably to defective and out-of-date sanitary fittings and drainage, and this is receiving the attention it urgently needs.

WESTERN OPHTHALMIC HOSPITAL, MARYLEBONE ROAD.

MR. HASTINGS NEALE forwards us the following extract from the minutes of a special general meeting of governors of this hospital, held on December 20th, 1893, with the request for our opinion thereon:

Agenda.—To consider the freeing of the hospital and to frame rules. After considerable discussion the following resolution was carried by a large majority, there being no votes against, but two governors did not vote:

"That in future the hospital be absolutely free. That no single person whose income exceeds 30s. shall be eligible as a patient. No married persons whose joint income exceeds 50s. excepting where there are more than four children, when the limit is to be £2 15s.

Unless an investigation should show any reason to the contrary, this rule to be rigidly observed."

It was further unanimously resolved that the framing of rules to carry above resolution into force be referred to the committee.

We have much pleasure in giving publicity to the step which the governors of the Western Ophthalmic Hospital have taken towards freeing that institution from the incubus of the "hospital-letter" system. No doubt that system is one which is oppressive to the poor and unsatisfactory to the subscribers. The former, if deserving and really ill, are put to serious annoyance and hardship by the necessary search for letters, while the latter have really no means, and often no leisure, to discriminate between the deserving and undeserving applicants, the appropriate and inappropriate cases.

We have received several letters bearing on this matter published in a Birmingham paper, which testify to the fact that public attention is now becoming awake to the evils of this system. So far, therefore, the governors of the Western Ophthalmic Hospital have our hearty good wishes for the success of their efforts to convert their institution into a "free" hospital. But in this, as in most things, the method is of as much consequence as the aim. Hitherto the governors have merely resolved on the establishment of a wage limit. We feel rather doubtful whether this, though it is no doubt an important, ought to be the sole, consideration in fixing the eligibility of a candidate for hospital treatment.

It seems obvious that a person who requires long or expensive or difficult treatment is less able to pay for it than one of the same pecuniary position whose case is less grave; so that it seems to us to follow inconceivably that the medical nature of the case ought to be taken into consideration as well as—and even, we should say, before—the patient's pecuniary circumstances. This can be done by requiring a medical certificate with all cases which are not urgent. We must again repeat that the vast majority of out-patients, ophthalmic and others, are suffering from diseases which are in no respect urgent, and in which a short delay for ascertaining their suitability for hospital treatment is of no consequence whatever; and further, that they are as able to pay for their medical treatment in ordinary exigencies as for any other necessary of life, and ought to do so, whether on the provident principle or otherwise. At the same time, if the disease is obstinate or complicated, the medical attendant may well wish to refer the case to a hospital either for an opinion or for treatment.

An inquiry, therefore, into the mere pecuniary condition of the patient seems to us unsatisfactory. Yet even this inquiry is by no means a simple matter. If insisted on, it must be made a reality, and can only be made so by means of some such machinery as is adopted by the Charity Organisation Society—and everyone knows how unpopular such methods are with the working classes. So that it seems to us that the governors of the Western Ophthalmic Hospital have undertaken a task the difficulties of which will become daily more and more apparent. Still, any honest effort to render medical charity more discriminating and more effectual deserves support, and we wish the present attempt all success.

FIRES AT LONDON HOSPITALS.

A FIRE broke out, early on the morning of January 5th, in the upper storey of the City of London Hospital for Diseases of the Chest, Victoria Park, E., which was not subdued until some considerable damage was done. One of the night nurses noticed a smell of burning in the attics, and opening the door discovered the corridor to be in flames. An alarm was raised, and the patients were removed under the supervision of the resident house-surgeon to a place of safety without any injurious effect. The firemen, who arrived soon after the alarm, extinguished the flames within an hour. The conflagration was confined to the upper floor and the roof. The origin of the outbreak is unknown, but it is thought to be due to a defective flue.

On January 6th a fire broke out at the Royal Free Hospital, Gray's Inn Road, but, owing to the prompt and energetic action of the officials of the institution, the outbreak was prevented from causing extensive damage. The room in which the fire occurred was one of the top isolated wards. It was much damaged, as was also an apartment below used as an isolated ward, and the board room.

EDINBURGH ROYAL INFIRMARY.

THE annual meeting of the contributors to the Edinburgh Royal Infirmary was held on New Year's Day, the Lord Provost presiding. From the report submitted, it appeared that the daily average of children in the hospital was 72, the great majority of whom were in the surgical wards. The daily average of adult patients was 690, the maximum at any one date 734, and the minimum 561. The average time under treatment was 28.4 days, as against 27.4 in the previous year; 4,133 patients were admitted from the country districts. The percentage of deaths to the whole of the medical and surgical cases under treatment was 7.00; deducting the deaths (142) that occurred within forty-eight hours after admission, the percentage falls to 5.40; 25,000 out-patients were treated. Till the projected larger extension of the hospital has been effected increased accommodation of a temporary kind had been provided in the property belonging to the Corporation in Lauriston Lane. The extension of the Convalescent House at Corstorphine had increased the accommodation by 40 beds, large day rooms, etc., and the home now contains a daily average of 77 patients.

METROPOLITAN HOSPITAL SATURDAY FUND.

FROM the report of the Council of the Hospital Saturday Fund just issued, it will be seen that the receipts from the workshops to November 25th were £10,847 as against £11,215 in the corresponding period of last year; and the street collection this year amounted to £3,095 as against £3,684 in 1892. Even with a balance of £1,114 remaining from 1892 as against £245 reserved from 1891, the total income of the fund on November 25th was £17,056 as against £17,176 at the corresponding date last year. The diminution of receipts is mainly attributed to trade depression.